

CITY OF MUSKEGON  
**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

**March 1, 2005**

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Vice-Chair, T. Bosma.

MEMBERS PRESENT: J. Hilt, L. Spataro, S. Kroes, T. Bosma, T. Russo, A. Brown

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: J. Fitzpatrick, D. Leafers, H. Griffith

OTHERS PRESENT: D. Jensen, 533-545 W. Western; J. Thompson, 1693 Jefferson

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

A motion to nominate T. Russo as Chairman was made by J. Hilt and supported by A. Brown. T. Russo declined the nomination.

A motion to nominate J. Hilt for Chairman was made by S. Kroes, supported by L. Spataro, and unanimously approved.

A motion to nominate T. Bosma for Vice-Chair was made by J. Hilt, supported by T. Russo, and unanimously approved.

J. Hilt chaired the rest of the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of January 4, 2005 was made by L. Spataro, supported by T. Russo and unanimously approved.

**NEW BUSINESS/PUBLIC HEARINGS**

J. Fitzpatrick introduced D. Leafers as the new Administrative Secretary for the Planning Department.

**Case 2005-04** Request to approve window sign. Applicant: Bosma Architects; 557 W. Western Ave.; District: Clay Western. J. Fitzpatrick presented the staff report. The front window of 557 W. Western was broken and replaced. Applicant is requesting approval of the sign on the window. Pictures and illustrations were provided to the commission members. Staff recommends approval of the request.

T. Bosma stated the window was not actually broken, but had lost its seal and therefore had to be replaced. He's had no vandalism at this location in the 20 years he's been there.

A motion to approve the sign in the new window was made by S. Kroes, supported by A. Brown and unanimously approved, with T. Bosma abstaining.

**Case 2005-05** Request to construct a public garden. Applicant: Debi Jensen (Pam Babbitt-owner); 533-545 W. Western Avenue; District: Clay Western. J. Fitzpatrick presented the staff report. Applicant wishes to construct a public garden on vacant lots. The proposed garden would consist of a gazebo, exposed aggregate garden paths, 20 concrete benches, 2 fountains, and various other features. Pictures and other illustrations were provided to the commission members.

D. Jensen presented an artist's drawing of the proposed garden. J. Fitzpatrick stated he would rather see iron fencing than the aluminum proposed by applicant, and the fencing and trellises must conform to City fence ordinance requirements. He also stated the parking area must be paved and marked. S. Kroes asked the applicant about the aluminum fence and asked if the change to iron would cause any hardship. D. Jensen states the iron fencing was considerably more expensive and that's why aluminum was chosen. J. Thompson suggested steel fencing as a less expensive option for iron. L. Spataro stated since the property is located in an A District, other materials that mimic the look of iron may be acceptable. He has no objection to the applicant using something other than iron. Commission members agreed to give applicant the option to use steel fencing and she would get more information on fence pricing for cost comparisons.

D. Jensen discussed the proposed trellis structures in the garden. Plans are to have them at a 10-foot height in the center and gradually decline in height by 2 feet as the trellis nears the road. The center of the trellis will be a backdrop for the water features and is intended to partially obscure the view of the warehouse building next door. H. Griffith stated that the City considers a trellis to be a fence, and applicant said she would apply for a zoning variance on the trellis/fence height. T. Bosma had no problem with the trellis as long as it is properly maintained. L. Spataro asked whether the fence in the front would be open so the interior of the park/garden is visible from the street. He had some concerns with security within the park if it could not be seen from the street. He also asked about the setback requirements for fencing in a commercial area. J. Fitzpatrick recommended that applicant consult the City Code Coordinator for the zoning requirements for the fence and trellises.

S. Kroes asked if there would still adequate parking for Mike's Saloon next door. D. Jensen stated there would be. D. Jensen also stated the light fixtures in the park will mimic the ones currently on the streets in that area.

L. Spataro had concerns about the faux windows painted on the warehouse next to the park. He doesn't feel they are architecturally appropriate. T. Bosma was not happy with the faux windows either and suggested a neutral background. D. Jensen stated that windows were suggested by someone else on a former drawing. D. Jensen stated that she had no problem leaving them out.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install a public garden at 533-545 W. Western with the following conditions: 1) All fencing would comply with the City fence ordinance. 2) All fences would be constructed of iron, wood, or steel and not aluminum. 3) The parking lot would be paved and lined. 4) There are no faux windows painted on the adjacent building. 5) The HDC would recommend approval of a variance for the height of the trellises to the Zoning Board of Appeals as described, was made by L. Spataro, supported by A. Brown and was unanimously approved.

## **WALK-ONS**

**Case #2005-06** Request to install fence; Applicant: Jeremiah Tyler; 1137 Peck St.; District: McLaughlin. J. Fitzpatrick presented the request to install a wooden fence on the property at 1137 Peck St. along with the applicant's sketch providing information on fence placement and construction. Applicant J. Tyler did not appear at the meeting. J. Fitzpatrick said the fence had already been approved by the City Code Coordinator pending HDC approval. J. Hilt asked if there were any pictures and J. Fitzpatrick stated he was only given the drawings. S. Kroes asked if a 6-foot fence was allowed. J. Fitzpatrick stated it was. L. Spataro was familiar with the property and said the submitted fence design was consistent with the style of the house. T. Bosma stated it appeared that the style, height, and location met all guidelines.

A motion that the HDC approve the request to install a fence on the property at 1137 Peck St. was made by S. Kroes, supported by T. Russo, and unanimously approved.

**Case #2005-07** Request to demolish garage; Applicant: Marie Anderson; 1305 Jefferson St.; District: Campus. J. Fitzpatrick presented the request to demolish the garage on the property at 1305 Jefferson Street. He said the applicant, M. Anderson, had told him she'd be at the meeting to provide photos and more details about the project but she was not in attendance. J. Hilt stated she did not want to vote on this without seeing photos. T. Bosma asked what the Commission's options were as far as postponing this issue. J. Hilt stated it could be tabled until further information was provided.

A motion that the HDC table the request to demolish the garage at 1305 Jefferson St. until further information is provided, was made by T. Bosma, supported by L. Spataro, and unanimously approved.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **OTHER**

**Christmas decorations** J. Fitzpatrick introduced John R. Thompson of 1693 Jefferson St. who appeared at the meeting to request HDC action on a home on Jefferson St. J. Thompson was upset that the homeowners had not removed the Christmas decorations from their front yard and they were getting shabby-looking from being left out all winter. He said this is an ongoing problem with this residence and wanted the HDC to send the homeowners a letter requesting their presence at the next HDC meeting to discuss the matter. J. Fitzpatrick passed out a sheet from J. Thompson outlining his request and photos of the property showing the decorations. T. Bosma asked if there were any City ordinances covering this type of complaint. L. Spataro stated he didn't think the HDC had any authority over lawn ornaments and asked if it could possibly fall under the environmental ordinance. H. Griffith stated lawn ornaments aren't covered, since they're not trash. S. Kroes said she sympathized with Mr. Thompson, but doesn't believe the HDC is the appropriate venue to address this and asked if there was another way this could be handled that was perhaps less antagonistic. J. Thompson stated the HDC was the place to address this and it was the HDC's responsibility to protect the historic neighborhoods. L. Spataro said he is willing to go knock on the resident's door as a member of the HDC to ask them if they'd remove the decorations. He wasn't comfortable sending a letter with no legal authority to back it up. S. Kroes stated she'd go to the residence with L. Spataro. J. Thompson asked if there was some type of City ordinance that could regulate this type of thing. L. Spataro asked at what point does something become rubbish and fall under the environmental ordinance. J. Fitzpatrick said staff could look into that. J. Thompson asked if he could have a report on what happened at the meeting to bring back to the others in the neighborhood so they could be informed of the outcome of his request.

The commission members concurred that L. Spataro, S. Kroes, and J. Hilt would go to the residence and speak to the homeowners as the HDC, with staff looking into whether or not the Environmental Inspector could do anything about the yard decorations.

## **ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:54 p.m. by J. Hilt.

dml